

# DATA BRIEF

## Caregivers in North Dakota

2021 BRFSS



### Background

Caregivers are individuals, often unpaid friends or family members, who provide direct care for individuals with an injury, illness, or disability.<sup>[1]</sup> In North Dakota (ND), caregivers play an important role in the health care system. According to AARP, North Dakotans are estimated to have collectively spent 58 million hours of unpaid caregiving, equivalent to \$1.0 billion in economic value, in 2023.<sup>[2]</sup> ND Health and Human Services (HHS) offers resources to resident caregivers including the Family Caregiver Support Program and Family Paid Caregiver Pilot Program.<sup>[3][4]</sup>

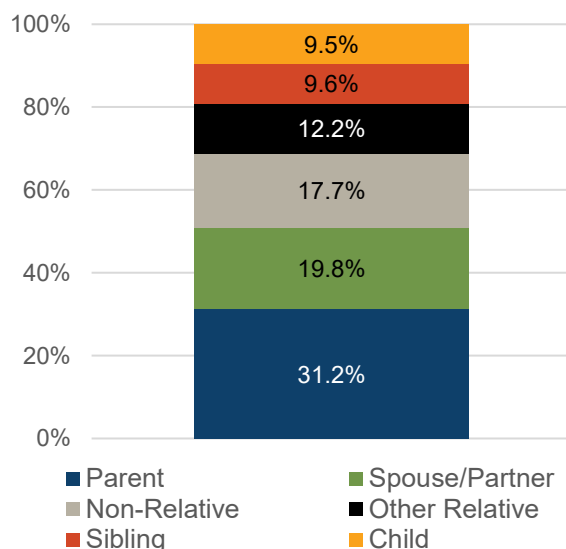
HHS included nine questions about caregiving on the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) in 2021. In total, 5,437 North Dakota adults participated in the survey and answered questions about regular caregiving.

### Caregiver Characteristics

Overall, 16% of those surveyed reported providing regular care to a friend or family member. Twenty percent of women reported being active caregivers, compared to 13% of men. Nearly 1 in 3 American Indian (AIAN) residents (29%) reported delivering regular care, significantly more than any other racial group, highlighting strong cultural ties to family caregiving. Caregiver status by demographic factors is outlined in Figure 2.

Among the respondents who reported being caregivers, parents (31%) were most commonly the care recipient (Figure 1). Most caregivers (59%) provided care for less than 8 hours per week, while 17% reported 40 hours or more. Half (51%) of the caregiver respondents have offered regular care for 2 or more years.

**Figure 1.** Who respondent caregivers are providing care for



Caregiving is more common among older adults, with 19% of respondents ages 65 and older and 40-64 reporting caregiving, compared to 12% of those ages 18-39 (Figure 2). No major differences exist in the prevalence of caregivers between urban and rural counties of residence. Twelve percent of caregivers are out of work or unable to work, compared to 6% of non-caregivers.

## Caregiving and Health Factors

Caregivers are at higher risk of psychological distress, physical health, and practicing risky health behaviors.<sup>[1]</sup> Differences in health outcomes are observed, as caregivers report significantly higher rates of frequent mental distress\*, high blood pressure, and depressive disorders. Rates of current cigarette use are higher among caregivers when compared to those who do not provide care. Figure 3 shows comparisons in the prevalence of other health outcomes and behaviors by caregiver status.

### ND Caregivers are:

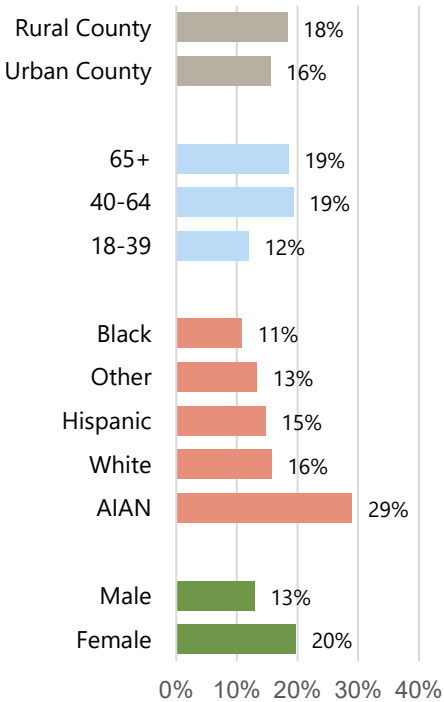
**39%** more likely to be current smokers

**87%** more likely to report frequent mental distress

**72%** more likely to have been diagnosed with a depressive disorder

\*when compared to non-caregivers, adjusted for demographic factors

**Figure 2.** Percent of respondents that are caregivers by demographic factors



**Figure 3.** Health Factors by Caregiver Status

	Non-Caregivers Percent (95% CI)	Caregivers Percent (95% CI)
<b>Health Outcomes</b>		
Frequent Mental Distress*	11.3 (9.9 – 12.7)	18.6 (14.6 – 22.6)
Frequent Physical Distress*	8.7 (7.6 – 9.8)	12.7 (9.6 – 15.7)
Diagnosed with a depressive disorder	17.8 (16.2 – 19.4)	28.1 (23.9 – 32.3)
Reported being obese (BMI > 30)	34.7 (32.8 – 36.5)	38.4 (34.1 – 42.7)
Reported high blood pressure	30.3 (28.7 – 32.0)	37.4 (33.5 – 41.3)
<b>Health Behaviors</b>		
Physically active	74.4 (72.8 – 76.1)	76.6 (73.0 – 80.3)
Excessive alcohol consumption	21.5 (19.8 – 23.1)	21.1 (17.5 – 24.7)
Routine checkup in the past year	71.8 (70.0 – 73.7)	76.8 (73.0 – 80.6)
Current smoker	13.9 (12.5 – 15.4)	18.0 (14.7 – 21.3)

## Survey Information

The ND Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an ongoing, anonymous telephone survey that asks adults about their health behaviors, chronic conditions, and other important topics related to health experiences and well-being. North Dakota has conducted the survey each year since 1984. Information collected is necessary for planning, supporting, and evaluating programs that promote the health of North Dakotans. The survey questionnaire is designed annually to cover topics selected by a committee of public health professionals in North Dakota.

## Contact Us



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1-855-NDBRFSS or 711 (TTY)



[www.hhs.nd.gov/data/BRFSS](http://www.hhs.nd.gov/data/BRFSS)

## Contributions

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## References

1. Schulz R, Beach SR, Czaja SJ, Martire LM, Monin JK. Family Caregiving for Older Adults. *Annu Rev Psychol.* (2020) 71:635-659. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-010419-050754 Family Caregiving for Older Adults – PMC
2. AARP Public Policy Institute (2023) Family Caregivers in North Dakota Provide \$1B in Unpaid Care to Loved Ones. Aarp.org. Retrieved April 25, 2025, from <https://states.aarp.org/north-dakota/ndcaregiving2023>
3. North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Adults and Aging Services (2025) Family Caregiver Support Program. <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/adults-and-aging/human-services/adults-and-aging/family-caregiver-support-program>
4. North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Adult and Aging Services (2025) Family Paid Caregiver Pilot Program. <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/individuals-disabilities/family-paid-caregiver-pilot-program>